



HOUSTON PD TRACKS ONE GUN'S PATH THROUGH ROBBERIES AND MURDERS

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The police department of the city of Houston, Texas has made extensive use of the most advanced techniques; as a result, police have gained invaluable investigative leads. Houston's substantial commitment to technology such as NIBIN and its use of crime data analysis have worked together, resulting in some dramatic successes.

On June 2, 2000, a male security guard was murdered in the city of Houston. One bullet and one .40 caliber Smith and Wesson cartridge case were recovered from the scene, and they were imaged into NIBIN within hours. A correlation on the entries indicated a link to a gun used in an aggravated robbery on May 20, 2000.

Earlier that same day, two male store clerks were murdered during a robbery. From this crime scene, two bullets and three .40 caliber Smith and Wesson cartridge cases were recovered. They too were imaged immediately. Correlation results indicated that the three crimes were linked, and that the firearm involved in each was a .40 caliber Smith and Wesson pistol.

In examining other recent robberies involving a .40 caliber Smith and Wesson pistol, the department's Crime Analysis unit determined that an aggravated robbery on February 11, 2000 might fit the pattern of these criminals. In this crime, a victim had been robbed of his wallet at gunpoint. (A credit card stolen from the victim was used after the robbery.) No one was injured in the robbery; a cartridge ejected from a .40 caliber Smith and

Wesson was recovered at the scene. On June 6, 2000, a match was discovered between extractor marks on the cartridge and on the evidence in the murders.

The Crime Analysis unit then searched local crime data for recently stolen pistols similar to the murder weapon; only a few weapons met these conditions. The owner of one of these, a pistol stolen five months earlier, submitted a cartridge case from it for imaging. NIBIN correlation identified a link between the cartridge case from the stolen pistol and the murder weapon, giving investigators the make, model and serial number of the murder weapon.

Further investigation of the credit card use after the February aggravated robbery revealed that the clerk processed the card transaction, though the credit card company rejected the transaction. When questioned, the store clerk admitted that he knew the person who used the card, and this clerk's information led the police to the names of the suspects in the aggravated robbery-homicides.

On June 9, 2000, arrest warrants were issued for two suspects. When the first suspect was arrested, he confessed his involvement in the June 2 murders.

On June 10, 2000, the second suspect was arrested. In his apartment, police found the Smith & Wesson pistol that had been linked to the murders. This defendant was convicted of capital murder on May 30, 2001, and received a sentence of death on June 4, 2001.